Purchase of Krasnopal despite CAG objections

633. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "MoD ignores CAG, buys Krasnopal" as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 9th February, 2002;

(b) if so, whether Government have overlooked the objections of the CAG and signed fresh contract with Russia for the purchase of Krasnopal TGM; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. C&AG's observations have been taken into consideration while taking the decision to procure additional Krasnopal TGMs.

(c) Does not arise.

Enquiry committee regarding fire in Ordnance Factory, Itarasi

†634. SHRI P. K. MAHESHARI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received the report of the Enquiry Committee which was set-up to assess the causes and losses due to fire incident in Itarasi Ordnance Depot;

(b) if so, the main recommendations made by the said Enquiry Committee in its report; and

(c) if not, by when this report is likely to be received by Government and the reasons for delay in the enquiry?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The Board of Enquiry set up to assess the causes and loss due to explosion in a building of Ordnance Factory Itarasi on 30.11.2002, where drying of Nitroglycertine Nitrocellulose is carried out, has submitted its report to the Ordnance Factory Board and is under examination. According to the findings of the Board of Enquiry, the likely cause of the explosion was shock received on the dry and hot floor surface due to slipping because of unbalanced condition. The main recommendations made by the Board are to revise the temperature of hot air for drying with automatic cut-off at 50°C; bringing down the explosive

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

limits to 4000 Kgs in the drying building; provision of continuous water supply to the paste drying building; proper monitoring of duration of drying and strengthening of traverses.

Outcome of US Defence Secretary's visit to India

635. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the outcome of the recent visit of US Defence Secretary to India; and

(b) the details of the agreements, if any signed during the visit?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defence visited India during November 3-4, of 2001. However, during this visit, no Agreement on Defence matters was signed between the two countries. This visit resulted in greater military to military cooperation between India and the US.

Investigation into fire accident in Bikaner Cantonment

†636. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number and make of arms destroyed in fire took place in Bikaner Cantonment and the details of production cost thereof alongwith the number of soldiers killed and injured therein;

(b) whether Government have conducted any inquiry into this incident; if so, the outcome thereof and the details of action taken by Government; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) An Army convoy of mainly civilian trucks carrying ammunition stationed near the Military Station, Bikaner caught fire on 11th January, 2002 at 1500 hrs. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered to investigate the cause of the fire and to ascertain the details of the loss dur to the outbreak of this fire. From the preliminary investigation it has been ascertained that 17 Army vehicles and 161 Civil Transport vehicles, army assets including ammunition, a unit run canteen, officers Mess, and a STD Booth have been destroyed/damaged. No soldier has been killed or suffered injury in the incident. Exact details of the losses will be known on the finalization of the report of the Court of Inquiry.

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.